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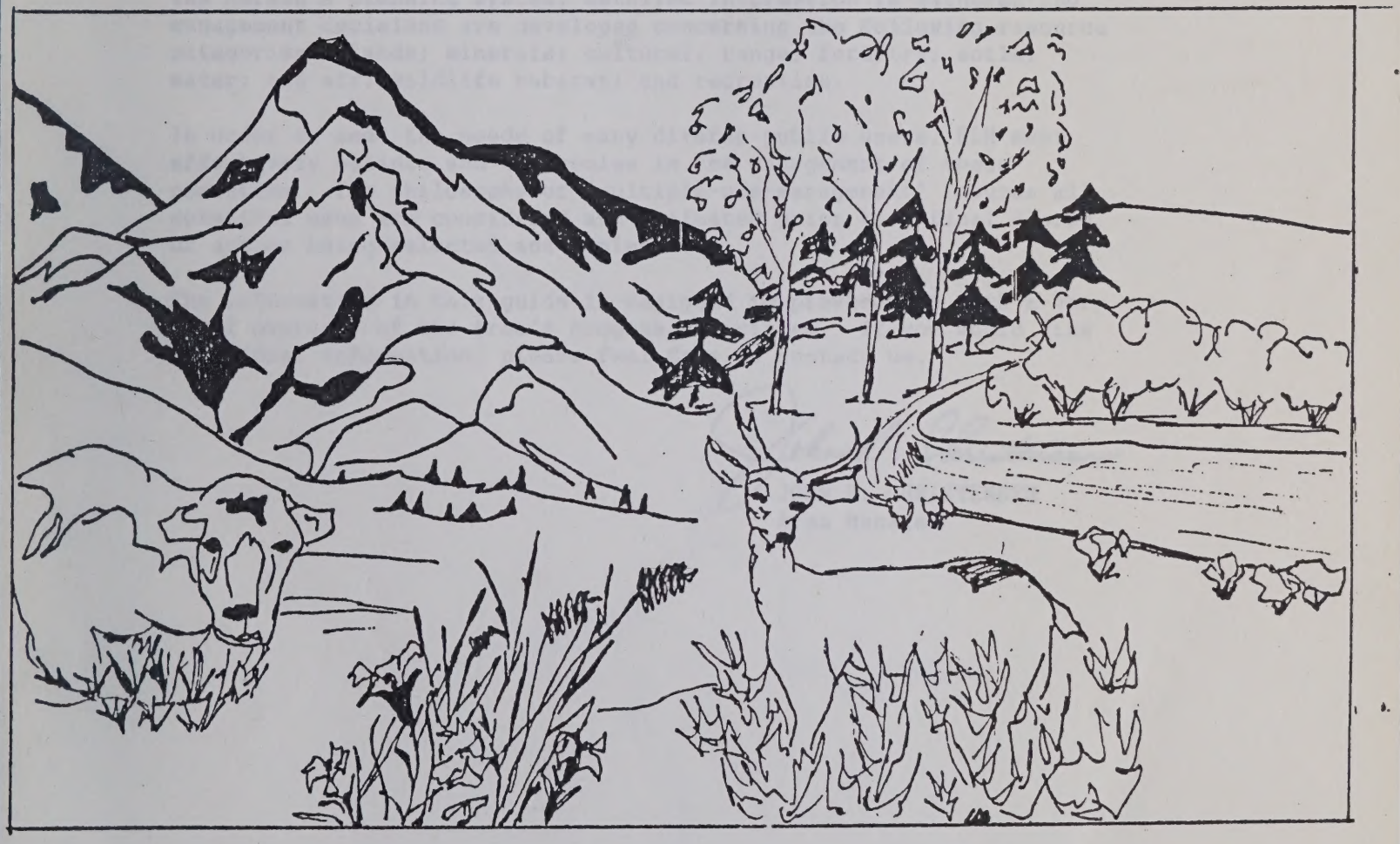
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

DEEP CREEK RESOURCE AREA



BRIEFING GUIDE
1987

TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

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BRIEFING GUIDE

The Deep Creek Resource Area of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is headquartered in Malad, Idaho. The Resource Area is one of fifteen within the State of Idaho and it is part of the Burley District.

Of the 1.2 million acres of land within the Resource Area, approximately 341 thousand acres are administered by the BLM. Under the Bureau's planning system, detailed information is gathered and management decisions are developed concerning the following resource categories: lands; minerals; cultural; range; forestry; soils; water; and air; wildlife habitat; and recreation.

In order to meet the needs of many diverse public users, BLM must effectively balance and compromise in the management of these resources. The philosophy of "multiple-use-management" insures all potential uses are considered and evaluated prior to a final course of action being selected and implemented.

The information in this guide is designed to provide you with a very brief overview of the Area's program activities. If you would like additional information, please feel free to contact us.

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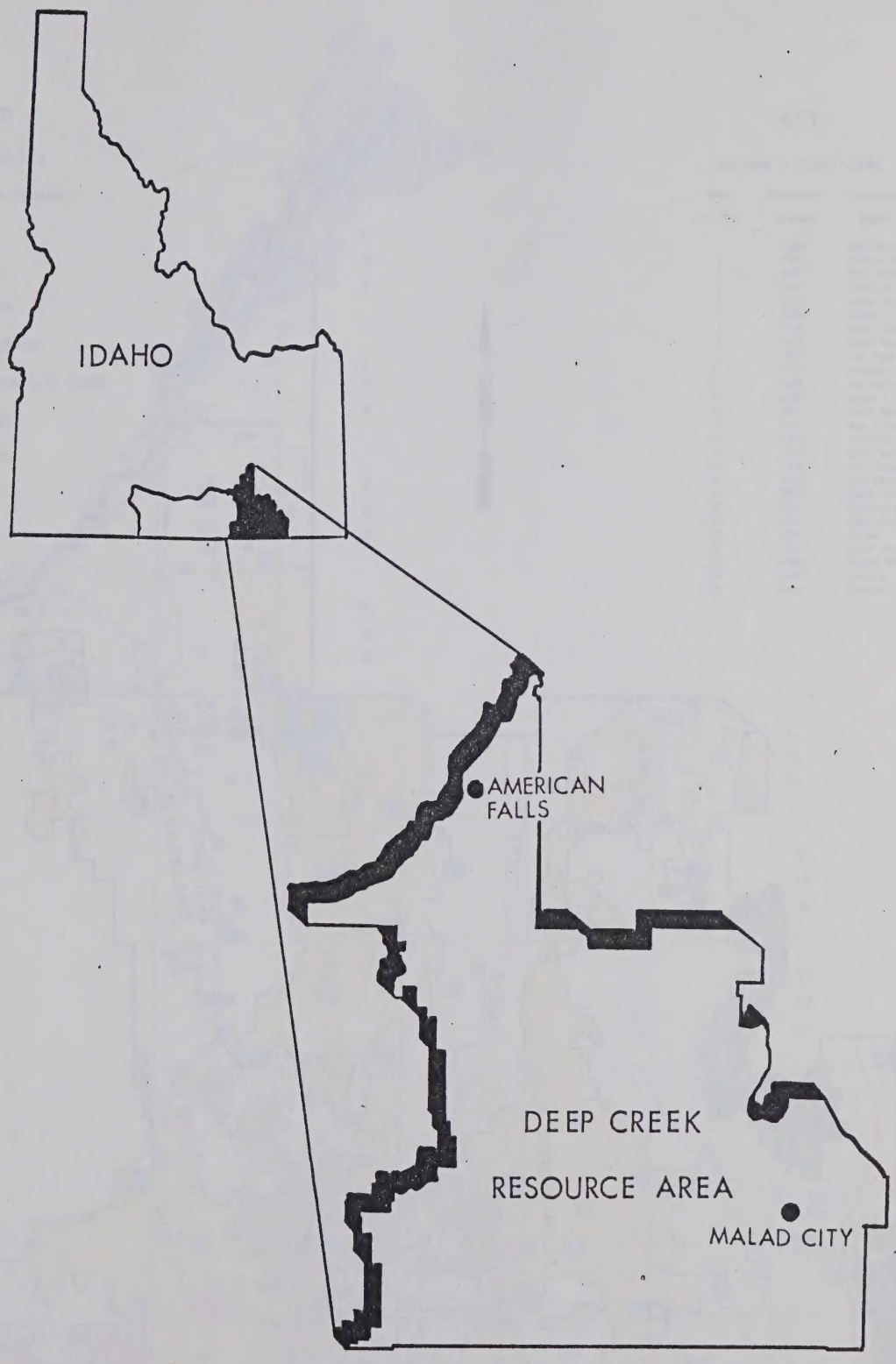
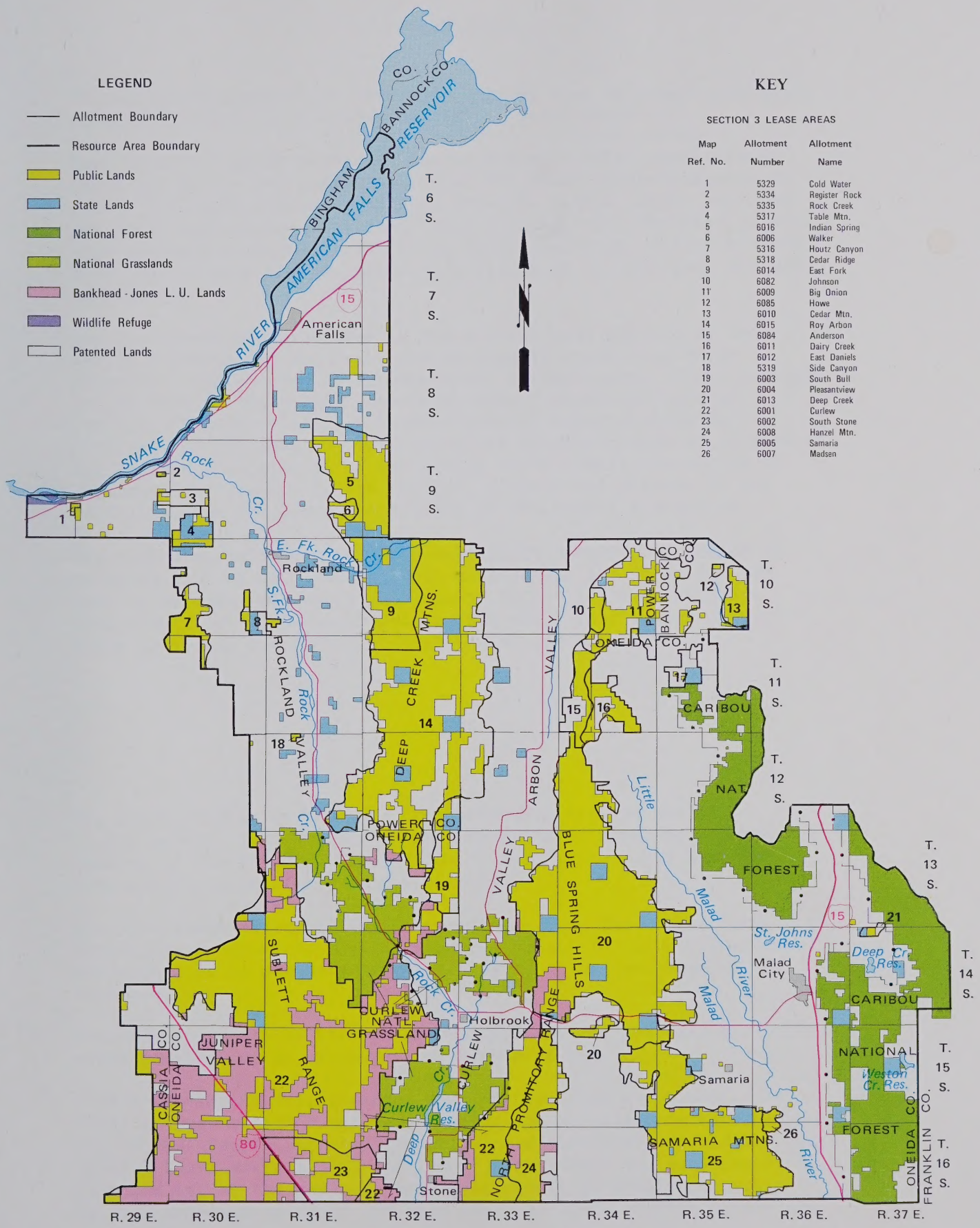

IDAHO
AMERICAN FALLS
DEEP CREEK
RESOURCE AREA
MALAD CITY

DEEP CREEK RESOURCE AREA



INTRODUCTION

"Stretches of picturesque poverty..."Lands long on desert and short on water"..."The lands nobody wanted"..."Waste land"...

Such descriptions of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered lands are hardly awe-inspiring. Gobi and lunar landscapes come to mind. Yet while you can find such areas on public lands, you also can find thick forest, babbling trout streams, rich deposits of coal, lush mountain pastures, prehistoric cliff dwellings, pristine views, free roaming wild horses, productive fields of oil and gas, and even gold mines.

The Deep Creek Resource Area is the eastern most portion of the Burley District and the lands are located in Oneida and Power Counties. The economy is predominantly agricultural. Steep mountain ranges rise abruptly from semi-arid, mostly sagebrush covered valleys. The foothills and meadows provide opportunities for ranching and dry farming, with irrigated farming practiced in some of the valleys. Vegetation on the public lands consist primarily of sagebrush and grasses in the valleys, juniper and grasses in the foothills, and Douglas-fir and aspen in the higher elevations.

The riches associated with the public lands should be a source of pride to each of us. Although BLM administers the lands for the people, we encourage every American to become involved with its management, to enjoy the treasures that they offer and to protect those resources for future generations of Americans.

LANDS

The lands program in the Deep Creek Resource Area is one of rights-of-way, land exchanges, and agricultural trespass. Since the opening of the detached Area Office in Malad, there has been an increase in interest for land exchanges.

The occurrence of agricultural trespass is high due to the large dry land farming activities in the Resource Area. An inventory of the Resource Area is scheduled to determine types and acreages of trespass.

The Area processes an average of two applications per year for either communications sites or power line rights-of-way.

Land sales in the Resource Area have not been too successful. In 1986, a total of 620 acres were offered and no bids were received for any of the offered parcels. These parcels have been offered for sale several times between 1983 and 1986. Since there was no interest to purchase any of the parcels, they will remain in public ownership. We will continue to offer for sale isolated lands through direct and

competitive sales procedures. Some of these isolated lands have received interest from the public for their purchase.

Other Federal Government Agencies holding withdrawn land in the Resource Area, which they no longer need, file a notice of intentions to relinquish the lands with the BLM State Office. The Resource Area usually processes four of these withdrawal cases per year.

Many compliance checks are made every year. This consists of monitoring and enforcement activities associated with construction, operations, and maintenance to ensure compliance with appropriate laws, regulations, and terms and conditions of the grant.

MINERALS

Mineral activity in the Deep Creek Resource Area is quite low. In the area we currently check on five free use permits for sand and gravel. Two are with the State of Idaho Transportation Department, and three with Oneida County. The sites are for construction and maintenance of roads.

Under locatable minerals, there are three Notice of Intent filed in the area, two are active and one inactive. There is some interest in the area on the east side of Black Pine Mountain for locatable minerals.

Oil and Gas Leasing has occurred over most of the Resource Area, but no active exploration or drilling has materialized. There was one drill pad constructed in West Elkhorn Canyon in 1981, but no actual drilling occurred. The drill pad was rehabilitated in the fall of 1986. The area processes 10 to 20 Oil and Gas Applications per year; most of which are renewals.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

In the Deep Creek Resource Area approximately 18,090 acres or less than 1 percent of the Resource Area have received some form of cultural resources survey, a total of 94 sites were located. The prehistoric sites in the area are mostly from the archaic and late time periods with the earliest sites dating from 4,000 years ago. High site concentrations are located in the Juniper Valley and near the Snake River. Springs and permanent drainages often have sites associated with them. Most of the sites are lithic scatters; some of them, especially near springs, appear to have considerable depth and multiple occupations. Earlier occupations are possible in the area especially in the valleys. Some of the sites in the Juniper Valley contain pottery, a rare occurrence in Idaho.

The protohistoric occupants of the area were the Shoshone Indians who crisscrossed the area in small groups in a seasonal round exploiting the resources available. Primary resources available were obsidian sources northwest of Malad, near Elkhorn Peak, and a white chert near Juniper. Also, available were deer, rabbits and some vegetable resources. On the whole the steep mountain slopes of the BLM lands did not offer an abundance of resources for prehistoric occupants.

The earliest historic entrance into the area involved fur traders, especially the Astorians in 1811, they were followed by numerous trappers who probably explored every permanent water course in eastern Idaho. They also created a faint trail between St. Louis and the British settlements in Oregon and established a trading post at Fort Hall. The migration to Oregon started as a trickle in the late 1830's, but by the mid 1840's it had increased significantly. The Oregon Trail crosses the northern most portion of the Resource Area just south of the Snake River. The discovery of gold in 1848, prompted, the developments of numerous cutoffs to California. The Hudspeths Cutoff was established on July 19, 1849, and rapidly became the principal route to California through eastern Idaho. It crosses the entire Resource Area from east to west using what passes and water sources were available. The earliest settlements in the Malad Valley were Mormon pioneers in the 1860's with major agricultural settlement not occurring until the 1880's with the need for produce to support the mines. The earliest, and about the only mining in the Malad Resource Area was at Black Pine, a silver and lead district. It was discovered in 1870, with limited production occurring after that time. In 1905, the Malad Valley Railroad reached Malad providing an outlet for the produce of the region.

RANGE MANAGEMENT

Range Management is the predominate program in the Deep Creek Resource Area. The range program has several major aspects:

1. Authorization and supervision of livestock grazing use.

2. Development of livestock management facilities.

3. Development and implementation of Allotment Management Plan.

One hundred and eighty-two livestock ranchers on 28 allotments (see attached map) harvest 56,000 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) of forage on an annual basis.

In June 1980, the Bannock-Oneida Grazing Environmental Impact Statement was completed. Several Range Program Summary Reports have been prepared based on the EIS (February 81, February 82, March 84, and March 86). These reports have been distributed to the public. These documents were designed to describe the actions being taken to

meet the basic rangeland management objectives.

The main objectives in reaching grazing capacity are to protect the resource values and to administer adjustments to the livestock operators using the public lands that will not result in severe socio-economic impacts. In order to accomplish this, provisions to phase in reductions in three increments over a five-year period were offered to the permittees to minimize the immediate impact of the adjustments. However, any increment of a reduction must be sufficient to achieve significant progress toward the resource objectives of the land use plan. Grazing adjustments may be made by decreasing livestock numbers, reducing season of use, or a combination of both that would result in less total forage consumption. An option requested by the permittees was to recognize voluntary non-use is not adequate to cover the reduction needed for a particular year, each permittee would provide an equitable share of non-use to make up the total suspended grazing preference required. We are now in the third and final phase of these adjustments.

Range improvements identified in the EIS have been about 60 percent completed at a cost of approximately $238,000. Additional funding is necessary to complete improvements that produce desirable vegetation for livestock, wildlife, and watershed needs. In addition, range projects are necessary to facilitate implementation of the intensive grazing systems. Consequently, more economical methods of achieving range improvements are being explored and permittees are being encouraged to participate more actively in accomplishing essential range improvements. In addition, new policies emphasize using range betterment funds for on-the-ground improvements, with a greater portion of project maintenance assigned to the permittees.

Monitoring programs will continue to consist of establishing range studies, terrestrial and aquatic wildlife studies, and water quality studies. They may include additional sample locations as agreed upon by the permittees and the BLM. Monitoring has recognized variability in existing vegetative/forage production during the five-year adjustment period as compared to initial forage production levels. Forage increases resulting from range improvement projects and land treatments will be monitored and changes applied toward the adjustments. The amount of a downward adjustment may be modified, increased, or decreased based on the studies after consultation with the permittees or grazing associations. This provision is included in the Rangeland Agreements that have been accepted and approved. Available information will be reviewed prior to each scheduled adjustment (2-year period). However, because an allotment can be better evaluated at the completion of a grazing cycle (2-4 years), or at a more convenient time for permittees and the BLM, the monitoring schedule will remain flexible and the determined on an individual allotment basis.

Allotment Management plans are in various stages of development, several in cooperation with other rangeland owners. A cooperative approach to the management system, regardless of land ownership, is essential for rangeland improvement. Several rangeland agreements where a mixed land ownership pattern occurs reflect this management

philosophy and resource commitment. It is projected that intensive grazing systems will generate 3,145 AUMs above that now being produced for livestock on public land in the Resource Area.

FORESTRY

The Deep Creek Resource Area consists of approximately 30,000 acres of commercial forest land. Each year about 250 thousand board feet (MBF) of timber is sold to commercial operators. Most of this volume comes from the lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir forests in the Deep Creek Mountains.

Additionally, about 100 cords of lodgepole pine is sold each year in Power County and 400 cords of juniper are sold in Oneida County for firewood. As many as 1000 juniper posts may be sold each year in Oneida County as well. Lodgepole pine for corral poles are available in the resource area also.

Firewood permits are issued up to 10 cords per family per year. Corral pole permits are sold up to 100 poles per family per year. There is no maximum for posts at this time.

The areas being harvested are presently under attack by bark beetles, mistletoe and spruce bud-worm. These pests usually lead to the death of the trees attacked. The harvesting of these areas serves to salvage the wood fiber and allows for reforestation. Native tree species are planted or naturally seeded after harvest operations are complete.

SOIL, WATER, AND AIR PROGRAM

The soil, water, and air program replaces the old watershed program. Nine rain gauges are installed throughout the resource area. These gauges, read monthly during the field season, supplement data from established weather bureau stations.

An intensive inventory of all water resources (stockponds, wells, springs, catchments, etc.) on public land was completed in 1981. Perennial streams are practically nonexistent on public land in this resource area. A major goal is to improve the efficiency of the soil to absorb rainfall. This watershed condition improvement can be attained via management and regulation of other land uses that affect the soil and associated vegetation; i.e., livestock grazing and ORV activity. The proper allocation of livestock forage coupled with appropriate grazing treatments incorporating adequate rest and/or deferment for the vegetation is essential. A range site in good condition can absorb water five to six times faster than the same

range in poor condition. Seasonal restrictions on some roads/trails and limited closures on some sensitive areas may be necessary. At present there are no habitat related ORV closures or restrictions in the resource area.

Water control structures and/or other mechanical means to improve the watershed have limited application. At present we have two major soil erosion projects on large gullies - one in Black Pine Valley and the other west of Holbrook. The rationale here is to "assist" Mother Nature by installing a number of detention structures to slow the flow of water resulting from high intensity thunderstorms. As the overland flow is reduced we expect to see increased spring flows and more wet areas that are very important for wildlife. We are presently investigating other major drainages to see if we can economically use similar detention structures to reduce erosion.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT

The public lands in the Deep Creek Resource Area provide a variety of recreational opportunities. Recreational activities occurring on public lands include hunting, fishing, camping, snowmobiling, ORV use and bird watching. The recreational use occurs in the form of hunting. Annual hunter days in the Resource Area now number well over 12,500 (8,400 for mule deer and 4,100 for upland game), while fisherman days total 7,500 annually. Snowmobiling is another popular use of the public lands during the winter. Currently, there is little data on the number of snowmobile user days. More information needs to be gathered concerning this use. The only ORV closure in the Resource Area is in the Cove area where the Idaho Fish & Game feeds a deer herd. The closure is from December through March each year. Other types of Off Road Vehicle (ORV) use also take place. Most of this ORV use is incidental to other uses of the land such as hunting, firewood cutting and camping. Camping, bird watching and sightseeing are other important recreational uses of the public lands.

Visual resource management, as a segment of the Recreation Program, concentrates on incorporation of visual inventory data into land use planning exercises and environmental assessments. The visual analysis identifies impacts to the visual resources and provides mitigation measures, where needed, to reduce or eliminate those impacts.

Another program associated with recreation management deals with Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Currently there is one ACEC, the Bowen Canyon Bald Eagle Sanctuary, within the resource area. One other area is presently being considered for ACEC designation, but at this time is still under review. ACECs are "...areas within the public lands where special management attention is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources, or

other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards."

WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

In the Deep Creek Resource Area the primary objective of the wildlife program is to protect and enhance wildlife habitat. To help accomplish this task three Habitat Management Plans (HMPs) have been developed. These activity plans provide management with guidance and direction needed to make responsible decisions as they relate to wildlife habitat within these HMP area. About 47% (161,793 acres) of public lands within the resource area are managed under these three HMPs.

Currently some of the wildlife project work under way include: browse seedings to enhance mule deer winter range, construction of self contained watering devices, and beaver transplanting for enhancing riparian habitat. Volunteers from local Boy Scout groups, schools and universities are being utilized to assist in such things as seed collection for browse plantings, conducting small mammal population studies on prescribed burn areas, monitoring raptor nesting success and building nest boxes for geese.

Conducting inventories and monitoring habitat condition is a major effort in effectively managing the wildlife habitat within the Deep Creek Resource Area. Each year inventories are conducted to identify wildlife use areas. These efforts have lead to the identification of a bald eagle winter roost site (formally designated as a ACEC), significant sagegrouse and sharptailed grouse winter ranges and high concentration of nesting Ferruginous and Swainson's hawks (both of which are listed as sensitive species). With the ever increasing use of public land it is imperative that these special wildlife use areas are identified and monitored. Proper management can then be applied to ensure that wildlife values are conserved and protected.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

The Fire Management Program in the Deep Creek Resource Area, until recently, has been one of full suppression only. Fire management, while not a new concept, is finally working its way into the BLM planning system. The Resource Area was the first in the State of Idaho to have a "Limited Suppression" and "Fire Management" plan. These plans recognize that resource values differ and in some cases full suppression may not be the appropriate level of response. In many situations natural fire may actually enhance some of the resources present.

The Burley District has the ultimate responsibility for fire protection on public lands. To enable us to protect the lands in the Deep Creek Resource Area, a fire guard station is located in Holbrook, 22 miles west of Malad. The station has a manning level of six (6) fire fighters and seven (7) days per week coverage from about June 15 to October 1 each year.

SUMMARY OF FY86 FIRE SEASON ON THE DEEP CREEK RESOURCE AREA

DEEP CREEK RESOURCE AREA			BURLEY DISTRICT AS A WHOLE	
Lightning	6 fires	1869.1 acres	31 fires	17,154.7
Man Caused	7 fires	591.1 acres	26 fires	1,926.3
Total	13 fires	2460.2 acres	57 fires	19,081 acres

The Deep Creek Resource Area has 23% of the total fire suppression actions in the Burley District. Of these, 54 percent were man caused, and 46 percent lightning caused. This made up 13% of the districts total acres burned.

FIRES 100 ACRES OR LARGER

DEEP CREEK RESOURCE AREA			BURLEY DISTRICT AS A WHOLE	
Lightning	2 fires	1860 acres	9 fires	17,050 acres
Man Caused	4 fires	587 acres	7 fires	1,677 acres

Note that 22 percent of the lightning fires which were 100 plus acres in size occurred within the Deep Creek Area, accounting for 11 percent of the acres burned. While 57 percent of the 100 plus acres of man caused fire and 35 percent of the acres burned were also within this area.

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